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SUBJECT: THE SECRETARY'S OCTOBER 28 MEETING WITH HONG KONG
CHIEF EXECUTIVE DONALD TSANG

Classified by EAP Acting Assistant Secretary Kathleen
Stephens, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: The Secretary and Hong Kong Chief Executive Donald Tsang exchanged views on the importance of democratic reform during their October 28 meeting. The Secretary said that the United States understood that Beijing placed constraints on Hong Kong but observed that people come naturally to democracy. Democratic governments do not take long to develop, she said, particularly in a sophisticated society such as Hong Kong. Tsang pointed out that universal suffrage is the Hong Kong government's ultimate goal, to which he was personally committed. But, he persisted; discussions about the means toward that end would take time. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The Secretary discussed Hong Kong's democratic reforms with Hong Kong Chief Executive Donald Tsang October 28 during a 30 minute meeting.

Universal Suffrage

¶3. (C) Tsang gave a positive review of Hong Kong's prospects, noting that the economy is expected to grow 5.5% in 2005 as a consequence of rapid development of the China market and Hong Kong's success as a financial center. He said Hong Kong's success also reflected the success of "One Country, Two Systems," in that Hong Kong's attributes -- the rule of law, clean government, independent courts, freedom of information, etc. -- have been preserved. Indeed, according to Tsang, the exercise of personal freedoms is in many respects broader today than before Hong Kong's reversion to Chinese sovereignty in 1997. Tsang noted, however, that there were certain limitations on Hong Kong's autonomy, such as in the areas of foreign affairs and national defense. Hong Kong also could not change its form of government without consulting with Beijing. The Chief Executive briefed the Secretary on his government's October 19 plan for expanding democratic representation. He said that any plan to change the form of government would need approval of the Hong Kong Legislative Council by two-thirds majority vote, the Chief Executive, and Beijing.

(C) The Secretary told Tsang that the United States had understood that the 1997 reversion would bring restrictions - such as on foreign affairs and national defense. However, she said there is inherent tension between the need to have Beijing's assent for democratic reform and the desire of the people for freedom of political expression and democracy. Tsang argued that Hong Kong's democratic institutions were not well developed and Hong Kong needed time to plan a course for greater democracy. The Secretary emphasized that people come naturally to democracy and that democratic governments do not take long to develop, particularly in a sophisticated society such as Hong Kong. She took the example of Afghanistan, which is much behind Hong Kong in terms of economic development but which has been able very quickly to establish democracy because of the desire of the people.

(C) The Secretary said that she recognized Tsang had recently come into office, and she hoped Tsang would

advance the process on universal suffrage. Tsang said he was consulting widely and starting a dialogue on broader reform. He said that Hong Kong would find a solution for itself: how to achieve the goal of universal suffrage and how to deal with Beijing in that process. He reiterated, however, that the broad consultations required to map out a plan would take time. The Secretary pressed Tsang, emphasizing that people come naturally to democracy, and that she hoped Tsang would continue to work on this.

Bilateral Cooperation and Economic Issues

(C) Wrapping up the meeting the Secretary noted that Hong Kong was to host a very important WTO Ministerial meeting at the end of the year. Both she and Tsang agreed that we need a successful conclusion to the Doha Agenda. Tsang said that he hoped the U.S. proposal on agriculture would bring positive results. Tsang added that Hong Kong was making all appropriate security arrangements both inside and outside the venues. Tsang observed that U.S. - Hong Kong relations continued to be close, with cooperation on the Container Security Initiative, avian influenza and security cooperation a few examples of our close ties. The Secretary thanked Hong Kong for close cooperation on avian influenza in particular. In closing, Tsang briefed the Secretary on a recent, precedent-setting internet piracy conviction in Hong Kong and said that Hong Kong was in the forefront of working with China to improve China's IPR protections.

(U) Participants:

U.S.

The Secretary
EAP Senior Advisor James Keith
US Consul General to Hong Kong James Cunningham
S- Steve Beecroft
PA - Sean McCormack
EAP/CM - Kaye Lee (notetaker)

Hong Kong

Chief Executive Donald Tsang
Information Services Yvonne Choi
HKETO Commissioner Jackie Willis
HKETO Deputy Margaret Fong
CE Private Secretary Jessie Ting
CE Media Assistant Donald Chen

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